



Franz Liszt - Eine Faust-Symphonie R. 425

The myth of Faust found its maximum affirmation in the nineteenth century, fascinating legions of writers, painters and musicians. Among the latter, later Schubert, Schumann, Berlioz and Gounod - to name but a few - even Franz Liszt was infected with Faustian disease and in 1854 composed the *Faust-Symphonie* in three parts for tenor, male chorus and orchestra. Hybrid work between program symphony and symphonic poem, the *Faust-Symphonie* is divided into three movements defined by Liszt *Charakterbilder*, or portraits of the three protagonists of Goethe's novel (Faust, Margherita and Mephistopheles), to which the author added at a later stage the *Chorus mysticus*, which signs the finale of the work. In the opening movement (Faust) there are five gods seven themes used by Liszt throughout the symphony; they depict the psychological complexity of the protagonist, passing through a wide range of moods. Anguish, torment, youthful momentum, passion love and desire for absolute knowledge take shape in the succession themes entrusted both to individual instruments and to entire orchestral sections. The latter acts as a counterpart to the versatility of the Faustian movement movement (Margherita). The last two themes pertain to the angelic woman: the first is a simple melody with an archaic flavor initially entrusted to the oboe accompanied by the viola, the second is instead a love theme that yes develops among the various orchestral families. Mephistopheles, as the spirit of negation, has no characteristic theme in the third movement, but as the protagonist's alter ego he appropriates the themes in a mocking way belonging to Faust, after having transformed and distorted them in the melodic profile e rhythmic. In the feverish rush of the Scherzo the negative influence of Mephistopheles it seems to overwhelm everything except the Margherita theme, which remains intact and pristine. To underline the power of the supreme love of the girl, who at the end of the novel intercedes for Faust saving him from eternal perdition, Liszt decided to add as last sound panel the Mystical choir, called to sing the verses dedicated to the saving power of the eternal feminine: a sweet and luminous song that closes the work rising to the highest spheres of Lisztian inspiration.